

**Meeting Montana's definition for
"Highly Qualified Teachers"
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) October 2006
Modified November 2008**

This document contains general questions and answers directly related to the requirements for "Highly Qualified Teachers" as defined by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 as reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Sections 1119 and 9101(11 and 23). The answers are based on the most recent information available as of September 2008. For specific information about Montana teacher licensure and endorsement requirements please contact the Montana Educator Licensure Unit at the Office of Public Instruction Web site at www.opi.mt.gov/cert or by telephone at (406) 4443150.

1. What does the term "Highly Qualified Teacher" mean?

"Highly Qualified Teacher" is a term defined in the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and focuses on three characteristics: 1) possession of a bachelor's degree; 2) holds a teaching license (some exceptions apply); and 3) has demonstrated content knowledge in each subject taught.

Under the NCLB, the U.S. Department of Education (USED) requires each state to define a "Highly Qualified Teacher" based on statute and guidelines developed by USED. USED requires states to file a definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher," accompanied by data to demonstrate that each teacher meets the state's approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher."

2. What is Montana's definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher"?

Montana teachers who hold a Montana license and are teaching in their endorsed subjects, in most instances, meet Montana's definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher." The requirement that teachers be "Highly Qualified" applies to all public elementary and secondary school teachers who teach a "core academic subject class" and are employed by Montana school districts. Specific instances for which exceptions do apply include: secondary teachers teaching "core academic subjects" with a minor (questions 5 and 6), teachers teaching in the middle grades 5-8 (question 8), elementary teachers teaching under a Class 5 Alternative License (question 9), and special education teachers teaching core academic subject classes (questions 15-19).

The term "core academic subjects," as defined by NCLB, means English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history and geography.

3. If I hold an active Montana teaching license effective prior to July 1, 2006, do I meet Montana's definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher"?

If you hold an active Montana teaching license effective prior to July 1, 2006, and are teaching in your endorsed area(s), in most instances, you meet Montana's definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher."

4. I will complete a Montana educator preparation program on or after July 1, 2006, and plan to seek a Montana license. Will I meet Montana's definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher"?

Elementary Teachers New to the Profession* If, as an elementary teacher new to the profession and licensed effective on or after July 1, 2006, you:

- . • hold at least a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university; and
- . • complete a Montana Board of Public Education accredited professional educator preparation program;
- . • earn a minimum combined score of 8 based on a multi-dimensional content test* embedded in the educator preparation program as a condition for recommending new teachers for licensure;
- obtain a Montana license (recommendation for licensure and endorsement by an accredited professional educator preparation program), and
- teach in your licensed and endorsed subject area.

Then, you meet Montana's definition of "Highly Qualified Teacher."

**The test includes:*

- 1) *grade-point average on at least 30 hours of postsecondary content course work;*
- 2) *performance-based assessments of content knowledge and skills conducted by a cooperating teacher and university supervisor; and*
- 3) *performance on the Praxis II Elementary content knowledge test.*

Secondary Teachers New to the Profession* If, as a secondary teacher new to the profession and licensed effective on or after July 1, 2009, you:

- . • hold at least a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university; and
- complete a Montana Board of Public Education accredited professional educator preparation program with a major in an endorsable subject, or the equivalent to a major, or
- . • earn a minimum combined score of 8 based on a multi-dimensional content test* embedded in the educator preparation program as a condition for recommendation for licensure; and
- obtain a Montana license and endorsement based on the above criteria, and
- teach in the endorsed subject area.

Then, you meet Montana's definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher."

**The test includes:*

- 1) *grade-point average on at least 30 hours of postsecondary content course work related to subject major, and*
- 2) *performance-based assessments of content knowledge and skills conducted by a cooperating teacher and university supervisor; and*
- 3) *Completion of a major or its equivalent or performance on the Praxis II specific content knowledge test.*

****A teacher new to the profession means a teacher teaching in a core academic subject or elementary curriculum with less than a year of experience.***

5. Will I meet Montana's definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher" if I complete an approved teaching minor in a "core academic subject"?

No, a minor in a core academic subject is not sufficient by itself to allow the teacher to meet the NCLB HQ teacher requirements to teach a core academic subject class. However, **If**, you are recommended by an accredited professional educator preparation program for secondary licensure (Grades 5-12) and endorsement in a "core academic subject" based on completion of an approved teaching minor, and, you verify coursework equivalent to a major in that core academic subject **or** take the Praxis II specific content knowledge test; **Then** you meet Montana's definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher."

6. As an experienced teacher, do I meet Montana's definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher" if I have a minor in a "core academic subject"?

No, a minor in a core academic subject is not sufficient by itself to allow the teacher to meet the NCLB HQ teacher requirements to teach a core academic subject class.

However, **If**, you are an experienced* teacher and

- hold an active Montana secondary license (Grades 5-12) and are endorsed in an academic major, and
- hold a minor in the endorsed "core academic subject" you are teaching, and
- satisfy the definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher" by completing the Montana High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation (HOUSSE), **Then**, you meet Montana's definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher."

****Experienced" means a teacher with one or more years of teaching in a "core academic subject.***

7. If I hold an active Montana elementary license and teach the elementary curriculum in a middle grade (5-8) do I meet Montana's definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher"?

Yes. A middle grades teacher who holds an active Montana elementary teaching license (K-8) and teaches the elementary curriculum to a specific grade (5-8) in an accredited elementary school (K-8) meets Montana's definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher."

8. If I hold an active Montana secondary license (Grades 5-12) and teach a core academic subject in an accredited middle school (Grades 5-8), do I meet Montana's definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher"?

Yes, if you have a major in the core academic subject you teach in an accredited departmentalized middle school (Grades 5-8) and an active Montana secondary license (Grades 5-12). If you do not have a major in the subject taught, you must complete the HOUSSE procedures to determine HQ status for that subject.

9. If I hold an active Montana Class 5 Alternative License and teach at the elementary level (K-8), do I meet Montana's definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher"?

No. A teacher with a Class 5 Alternative License teaching at the elementary level (K-8) must complete the HOUSSE to determine HQ status. A Class 5 Alternative License is not sufficient to allow a teacher to teach the elementary curriculum to one or more elementary students (K-8) without meeting the content knowledge verification requirement of NCLB. See question 4 for specifics "Elementary Teacher New to the Profession".

10. What responsibility does my school district have in meeting Montana's definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher"?

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act as Reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act Title I, Part A SEC. 1111

11. If I meet another state's approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher," do I automatically meet Montana's definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher"?

No. Teachers who meet another state's approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher" also meet Montana's definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher," provided they also meet Montana's licensure requirements. For more information, contact the Montana Educator Licensure Unit of the Office of Public Instruction on the OPI Web site at www.opi.mt.gov/cert or by telephone at (406) 444-3150.

12. If I meet Montana's definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher," what do I need to become "Highly Qualified" in another state?

Contact the specific state education agency for "Highly Qualified Teacher" requirements of that state.

13. If my active Montana educator license includes an endorsement in Broadfield Social Studies, do I meet Montana's definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher"?

Yes. Teachers, with a Broadfield Social Studies endorsement meet Montana's definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher," with regard to teaching social studies and, based on preparation in course content in the social studies discipline areas including history, civics and government, geography and economics.

14. If my active Montana educator license includes an endorsement in Broadfield Science, do I meet Montana's definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher"?

Yes. Teachers, with a Broadfield Science endorsement meet Montana's definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher," in Science. Science is considered a core academic subject according to the NCLB Title IX Section 1901 (11).

15. What are the general requirements to meet Montana's definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher" for special education teachers hired after July 1, 2006?

Teachers at the elementary school level (PK-8) If a special education teacher is the sole instructor to any elementary student for 60% or more of the school's day, the teacher is considered to be the sole provider of elementary curriculum and must meet the NCLB HQ requirements for the Elementary Level.

Teachers at the secondary school level (Grades 5-12) teaching core academic subject classes If a special education teacher is the sole instructor of a core academic subject class without input from another teacher who meets the Federal HQ requirements in that core academic subject, the teacher must meet the HQ requirements of NCLB. These special education teachers who teach core academic subjects must meet the content knowledge requirements that apply to other teachers of core academic subjects.

16. I hold a Montana K-8 license endorsed in Special Education and I exclusively teach children with disabilities. Do I meet Montana's definition of a "highly qualified teacher" to teach multi-subjects K-12?

It depends.

Yes. A teacher who holds an active elementary license endorsed in PK-12 special education and teaching at the elementary level (PK-8) meets the HQ NCLB requirements.

Teachers at the elementary school level (PK-8) If a special education teacher is the sole instructor to any elementary student for 60% or more of the school's day, the teacher is considered to be the sole provider of elementary curriculum and must meet the NCLB HQ requirements for the Elementary Level.

No. A teacher who holds an active elementary license endorsed in PK-12 special education and teaching core academic subjects at the secondary level (9-12) must complete the Housse to determine HQ status.

Teachers at the secondary school level (Grades 5-12) teaching core academic subject classes If a special education teacher is the sole instructor of a core academic subject class without input from another teacher who meets the Federal HQ requirements in that core academic subject, the teacher must meet the HQ requirements of NCLB. These special education teachers who teach core academic subjects must meet the content knowledge requirements that apply to other teachers of core academic subjects.

17. As a special education teacher, I will not be teaching core academic subjects, but instead, I will exclusively provide consultation or collaborative services with general education teachers who meet Montana's definition of a "Highly Qualified

Teacher." Do I meet Montana's definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher"?

If you are not the sole provider of any core academic subject or you are not the sole instructor to any elementary student for 60% or more of the school day, you do not need to make a determination of HQ status.

18. As a special education teacher, I teach "core academic subjects" to students with significant cognitive disabilities who qualify for taking the Criterion-Reference Test-Alternate (CRT-Alt). Do I meet Montana's definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher"?

If you are not the sole provider of any core academic subject or you are not the sole instructor to any elementary student for 60% or more of the school day, you do not need to make a determination of HQ status.

19. I hold a Montana 5-12 license endorsed in a core academic subject and PK-12 Special Education and I am a teacher new to the profession. I teach multiple "core academic subjects" exclusively to children with disabilities. Do I meet Montana's definition for "Highly Qualified Teachers" to teach "core academic subjects" to secondary students with disabilities?

A secondary level (9-12) special education teacher who is new to the profession and teaches multiple "core academic subjects" exclusively to secondary students with disabilities meets Montana's definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher" if he/she holds an active Montana secondary teaching license endorsed in Special Education and is endorsed with a major or its equivalent, in any core academic subject class the teacher is assigned to teach.

The new federal regulations effective October 13, 2006, implementing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Information Act of 2004 (IDEA) provide guidance to states' HQT requirements for multi-subject special education teachers. Following a review of the new regulations, the OPI has established a High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation (HOUSSE) for Special Education teachers consistent with federal regulatory guidance. To maintain "Highly Qualified Teacher" status special education teachers are required to complete the HOUSSE within two years. Teachers working in a rural district who qualify under the Small Rural School Achievement Program (SRSA, Title VI, and NCLB) must complete the HOUSSE within three years. See the Montana HOUSSE.